



Billing Code: 4333–15

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-R7-ES-2015-N152]

[FF07CAMM00–FX–FR133707REG00]

Marine Mammals; Letters of Authorization to Take Pacific Walrus and Polar Bears, Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, Alaska

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of issuance.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has issued letters of authorization for the nonlethal take of polar bears and Pacific walrus incidental to oil and gas industry exploration, development, and production activities in the Beaufort Sea and the adjacent northern coast of Alaska and incidental to oil and gas industry exploration activities in the Chukchi Sea and the adjacent western coast of Alaska. These letters of

authorization stipulate conditions and methods that minimize impacts to polar bears and Pacific walrus from these activities. These letters of authorization are available electronically at the following location:

<http://www.fws.gov/alaska/fisheries/mmm/itr.htm>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Michael Hendrick at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Marine Mammals Management Office, 1011 East Tudor Road, MS 341, Anchorage, AK 99503; (800) 362–5148 or (907) 786–3479.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

On August 3, 2011, the Service published in the *Federal Register* a final rule (76 FR 47010) establishing regulations that allow us to authorize the nonlethal, incidental, unintentional take of small numbers of polar bears and Pacific walrus during year-round oil and gas industry exploration, development, and production activities in the Beaufort Sea and adjacent northern coast of Alaska. The rule established subpart J in part 18 of title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and is effective through August 3, 2016. The rule prescribed a process under which we issue Letters of Authorization (LOAs) to applicants conducting activities as described under the provisions of the regulations.

Each LOA stipulates conditions or methods that are specific to the activity and location. Holders of LOAs must use methods and conduct activities in a manner that minimizes to the greatest extent practicable adverse impacts on Pacific walrus and polar bears and their habitat, and on the availability of these marine mammals for subsistence

purposes. Intentional take and lethal incidental take are prohibited.

In accordance with section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.) and our regulations at 50 CFR 18, subpart J, we issued LOAs to each of the following companies in the Beaufort Sea and adjacent northern coast of Alaska:

Beaufort Sea Letters of Authorization

COMPANY	ACTIVITY	PROJECT	DATE ISSUED
Alaska Development and Export Authority	Development	North Slope Liquefied Natural Gas Facility	February 10, 2014
Alaska Development and Export Authority	Development	North Slope Liquefied Natural Gas Facility (amended)	May 27, 2014
Alaska Gasline Development Corporation	Exploration	North Slope Geotechnical drilling	April 8, 2014
BP Exploration, Inc.	Exploration	North Prudhoe Seismic Survey	June 11, 2014
BP Exploration Alaska Inc.	Exploration	Winter Vibroseis Seismic Survey	January 29, 2015
Brooks Range Petroleum Corporation	Development	Mustang Development Program	January 15, 2015
Caelus Natural Resources Alaska, LLC	Development	Nuna Development Activities	April 20, 2015
ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc.	Exploration	Environmental Sampling and Well Plug Abandonment	January 16, 2014
ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc.	Exploration & Development	North Slope activities	December 12, 2014
ExxonMobil Development Company	Exploration	Preliminary studies for development of Prudhoe Bay Gas Plant	May 16, 2014
ExxonMobil Alaska LNG LLC	Exploration	Prudhoe Bay Unit Hydrology Studies	August 6, 2014
ExxonMobil Development Company	Exploration	Prudhoe Bay Unit Field Studies	December 23, 2014
ExxonMobil Development	Exploration	Exploration activities at Point Thomson	January 29, 2015

Company			
Geokinetics	Exploration	Caelus and Great Bear 3D Winter Seismic Surveys	January 14, 2015
Global Geophysical Services, Inc.	Exploration	Kad River 3D Winter Seismic Surveys	January 14, 2015
Global Geophysical Services, Inc.	Exploration	Schrader Bluff 3D Seismic Survey	January 15, 2014
Hilcorp Alaska, LLC	Production	Operations at the Milne Point, Endicott, and Northstar Facilities	November 14, 2014
Hilcorp Alaska, LLC	Exploration	Geotechnical Investigation, Sonar and Scour Survey	January 29, 2015
NordAq Energy, Inc.	Exploration	Tulimaniq Exploration Drilling Project	November 14, 2014
North Slope Borough	Development	Pipeline upgrades near Barrow	July 28, 2015
Olgoonik Specialty Contractors, LLC	Development	Point Lonely, Oliktok Point, and Bullen Point DEW Line Cleanup	March 25, 2014
Olgoonik Fairweather, LLC	Exploration	Environmental Baseline Studies	June 11, 2014
Olgoonik Specialty Contractors, LLC	Development	Demolition and Remediation Projects	May 29, 2015
Pioneer Natural Resources Alaska, Inc.	Development	Nuna Development Project	February 13, 2014
Repsol E&P USA Inc.	Exploration	Drilling Program in the Colville River area	January 29, 2015
SAExploration, Inc.	Exploration	North Slope Big Bend 3D Seismic Survey	February 11, 2014
SAExploration, Inc.	Exploration	Colville River Delta Seismic Survey	August 14, 2014
SAExploration, Inc.	Exploration	Umingmak 2015 Program Horseshoe Winter Seismic Survey	December 23, 2014
Shell Exploration and Production Company	Production	Ice Overflight Surveys	January 14, 2015

On June 12, 2013, we published in the ***Federal Register*** a final rule (78 FR 35364) establishing regulations that allow us to authorize the nonlethal, incidental, unintentional take of small numbers of polar bears and Pacific walrus during year-round oil and gas industry exploration activities in the Chukchi Sea and adjacent western coast of Alaska. The rule established subpart I of 50 CFR part 18 and is effective until June 11, 2018. The process under which we issue LOAs to applicants and the requirements that the holders of LOAs must follow is the same as described above for LOAs issued under 50 CFR 18, subpart J.

In accordance with section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA and our regulations at 50 CFR 18, subpart I, we issued LOAs to the following companies in the Chukchi Sea:

Chukchi Sea Letters of Authorization

COMPANY	ACTIVITY	PROJECT	DATE ISSUED
Olgoonik Fairweather, LLC	Exploration	Environmental Studies	July 23, 2014
Shell Exploration and Production Company	Exploration	Ice observation overflights	January 14, 2015
Shell Exploration and Production Company	Exploration	Ice observation overflights (amended)	January 29, 2015
Shell Exploration and Production Company	Exploration	Exploration Drilling Program in the Chukchi Sea	June 30, 2015
Shell Exploration and Production Company	Exploration	Exploration Drilling Program in the Chukchi Sea (amended)	July 24, 2015
TGS	Exploration	Seismic Operations	June 28, 2013
TGS	Exploration	Seismic Operations (amended)	September 11, 2013

Dated: October 26, 2015.

Peter J. Probasco

Acting Regional Director, Alaska Region

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